

# Put yourself in the picture



## Jaz

Jaz, an 18-year-old from Humberston who has been in the care of foster parents for 13 years has told how her “stable home life” has helped her towards a successful academic career and one that has led her to a university education.

Keen to shake off the stereotype that foster children are “naughty”, Toll Bar Academy 6th form student Jaz has said that without the support of her foster parents, she “wouldn’t be where I am today”.

Jaz, who is hoping to get the grades necessary to study at Leeds Beckett University in September, has lived with her foster parents Sue and Ray since 2003, after her mum struggled to cope with looking after her and her two siblings, and put them up for care before fleeing to live in Australia.

Thirteen happy years down the line, Jaz has said that a stable home life has been the key to her living a “normal” childhood. She said: “I just think of it as an ordinary way of living. I’m not different because I’ve been fostered it’s just a different way of living and it’s been a happy home life.

“A stable home life has helped me develop into the person that I am today. What I have done at school is largely down to my foster parents and if I was still with my mum, I don’t think I’d be where I am today.

“I get treated like a part of the family and haven’t been separated or anything. I’ve been cared for like I’m their daughter and they would do for me what they would do for their own son.”

With it widely being reported that there is a national shortage of foster parents, Jaz added that taking on the role is a “great opportunity” to help change a young person’s life.

She said: “I’ve heard of people having bad experience with foster parents but this has been the best thing for me. I’m proof that the system does work.

“I’ve got a lot to thank my foster parents for because without them I wouldn’t have done as well academically. They really have been a mother and father figure for me.

“Being a foster parent is an amazing chance to really help someone and get a lot of good outcomes for themselves.”